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FRENCH CATHOLICS AND THE SOCIAL QUESTION.

BISHOP KEANE has authoritatively expounded the general principles which guide Christians in economic questions.* I shall now endeavor to indicate in a general way the practical methods commended by French Catholics for the amelioration of the material and moral condition of manual laborers. Here is the knotty point of the social question of to-day.

Obviously, we are not concerned with the construction of a new economic order radically different from that which has obtained since there have been civilized societies,—an order which, upon the abolition of slavery by Christianity, took definitive form when uninterrupted progress had substituted civil liberty and equality for old class distinctions. Individual liberty and responsibility, the care left to each family of providing for its own subsistence, the right of each one to take his own chances in life under impartial protection of the law, respect for private possessions, and inequality of actual conditions,—these are its fundamental characteristics. Our speech stigmatizes as Socialists those Utopians of different stripes who wish to overthrow this order, and substitute a social condition which is without historical precedents, and is purely a figment of their imaginations. Not all Socialists are communists; and certain of them, called State Socialists, dream of a discipline, rigorously enforced by government, which would insure perfect and lasting harmony of all interests.

On the other hand, the natural economic order is susceptible of constant improvement, simply through the

* *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, October, 1891.

action of Christian morality. The gospel renders the sense of justice more delicate. It enjoins respect of man and esteem of labor. Finally, by the large place given to charity it propagates a multitude of institutions adapted to the successive needs of the times and capable of tempering and softening the action of those economic influences just enumerated, which are the essential basis of terrestrial society.

The immense material progress of the century ought evidently to be of more and more benefit to manual laborers, who constitute the great majority of mankind. Political progress, which is summed up in the universal triumph of democracy, has made them more and more anxious to realize the hopes born of improvements in machinery, of new ways of communication, and of the increasing rarity of war. The changes for the better already secured are considerable. They are shown by the enormous increase of European populations,—359,500,000 in 1891 as against 165,000,000 in 1789,—by welcome changes in the food, dwellings, and clothing of workmen in town and country. Nevertheless, certain groups of laborers in the slums of large cities have remained outside this general current, and, moreover, the real changes for the better do not keep pace with expectations; and, although the great increase in numbers is for the economist and the philosopher alike one of the most auspicious forms that general progress can take, still this consideration affects but little those who are only a figure in the divisor, and it does not prevent them from finding their quotient too small.

For all these reasons the working classes, whose horizon has been so enlarged by instruction and democracy as to include the great interests of humanity, will henceforth be far less interested than their ancestors have been in purely political questions and in international rivalries. They will be preoccupied more and more with the relations of capital and labor. It should not be a matter of surprise,

therefore, if conflicts between these two necessary factors of production become more frequent. The great misfortune is that the diminution of Christian faith, due to the false science of the English deists and the French encyclopædists of the eighteenth century and of the agnostics and materialists of the present century, makes these conflicts much more bitter, and leads to the formation of anarchical parties, which by their brilliant promises seduce the masses, who still have to endure so many privations. On the other hand, the great hope of a peaceful solution of the social question is the religious revival, to which Leo XIII. has given a powerful impulse by showing the affinity existing between the aspirations of the workingmen of to-day and the permanent teachings of Christianity,—a movement with which in England and America so many good men belonging to Protestant confessions are in accord. But this deep and general movement in no way enables us to dispense with the resort to practical methods of combating existing evils and promoting the welfare of the people.

These methods may be grouped under four heads: (1) state action; (2) action of employers; (3) benevolence, properly so called, springing directly from charitable impulse and from pious zeal for the material relief and moral elevation of manual laborers; (4) associations of workingmen based upon co-operation and mutual aid.

A. State intervention in the organization of industry is recognized by all Catholics, and always has been, it is safe to say, by French economists. The latter, indeed, in 1841 and 1874 were the promoters of the factory legislation in this country. The impulse of original sin constantly leads to new manifestations of the exploitation of man by man, and, moreover, the material changes in the conditions of industrial enterprise breed difficulties unknown to earlier industrial organizations. Society, then, can never lay down its arms in the struggle against

evil, and rely simply upon the free play of private interests for its suppression, as the Physiocrats of the last century with their rationalistic optimism thought it might. On the other hand, state intervention should be limited both as to the end to be attained and as to the extent to which it seeks to suppress evil. It should not, after the manner of the Elizabethan legislation so warmly described by the Rev. W. Cunningham,* undertake to prevent the confusion caused by private initiative and to assure the national good by subordinating individual interests; for under these fine pretexts a self-styled paternal government might be intrusted with the direction of industry and the control of private life.

Factory legislation ought also to confine itself within reasonable limits; for, if it pretended to obviate all possible evils, it would prevent the realization of much that is good. There are plenty of things that positive legislation must be content to leave in the domain of morals and of opinion. All Catholics have voted for the various measures calculated to give efficient protection to children and young persons employed in factories, and to extend inspection to work-rooms and shops in small industries; but they refuse to authorize inspectors to violate the sanctity of the home under the pretext of watching over the interests of children working with their own parents.

The principle that women, of whatever age, ought likewise to be protected, is more and more unanimously admitted. The prohibition of underground work in mines, limitations as to the length of the working day, and the prohibition of night work for adult women are generally admitted in principle; but numerous exceptions should be recognized in practice, inasmuch as certain industries are active but part of the year, while in others, like newspaper printing and dressmaking, night work is often necessary. In view of the increasing number of

* *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce*, 2d edition.

women who, as a result of the evolution of our civilization have to provide for themselves, we must guard against the danger of shutting them out of employments by well-intentioned but imprudent legislation. Opinion enlightened by the press can do much to determine the kinds of labor that may with propriety be required of women, and to impose upon employers the consideration due to their sex. A certain amount of control over the indoor regulations of factories may be permitted with this intent, provided it does not go beyond the limits already indicated.

All parties to-day, save some old doctrinaires, are unanimously in favor of insuring by law one day of rest for workers of all ages and of both sexes. It is a pure antichristian superstition that up to the present time has led the French legislator to refuse to designate Sunday for this purpose. Catholics are, of course, in the front ranks of the "Popular League for Sunday Rest" which is trying to secure for employees in trade and in public service the rest to which they are entitled on the Lord's Day. But a positive law, prohibiting the employment of any one on Sunday, is needed to put a check upon the deleterious competition of depraved traders with honest people. There is no danger in such a legislative prohibition, for it only interprets the eternal law of God; and, inasmuch as politicians cannot create a second Sunday in the week, there is no fear of an undue extension of the principle involved in this law. The great example of free America is the favorite argument of French Catholics in regard to this question. The great majority of them, on the other hand, are opposed to fixing by law the length of the working day for adult male workers. This is not on account of any prejudice in favor of absolute *laissez-faire*, but because the social conditions of Western Europe make such a limitation inopportune and dangerous.

In short, it is necessary to distinguish carefully two ideas too often confused. The legislator may, and even

ought, to fix a maximum working time (*Maximalarbeitszeit* the Germans call it) for adult workingmen, in case habitual overwork positively detrimental to health and to the preservation of the race is imposed upon them,* where, by virtue of their social inferiority or the absence of organization, they are not in a position to make their rights respected. This is the case in Russia and in Austria. But it is quite otherwise in France, where there are almost no abuses of this kind,† and where, in any event, workmen know too well the use of strikes to need any paternal legislation.‡ Quite another thing is the notion that it is the duty of government to determine the length of working day which ought, under normal conditions, to insure a good state of industry and suitable wages for the laborer (*Normalarbeitszeit*),— eight hours to-day as the trades-unions demand, three hours or two hours as the Socialists maintain will be sufficient after the triumph of collectivism. But such determination is beyond the scope of science and the power of government, even when

* Overwork ought to be estimated according to the nature of the industry. It is evident, then, that in employments where deleterious materials are used the legislator, if unable absolutely to prohibit their use, may limit the working time even of adults. It is a question of public hygiene, not an economic question.

† Unfortunately there are in Paris, as in London, many isolated workers toiling in their own homes, notably dressmakers, who exhaust their strength by excessive labor. The evil comes from contracts for certain kinds of finished work,— contracts which are again let out at lower rates, the middlemen gaining the difference. The Commission of the House of Lords on the Sweating System has recognized the great difficulty of remedying this, without absolutely destroying individual liberty and without establishing police control over what every one does at his fireside. Outside of the very large cities, the sweating system is unknown in France.

‡ Close upon the Revolution of February, 1848, came a law fixing the working day at twelve hours. Inasmuch as this maximum was not even reached in most industries, this law has been allowed to stand. It does not forbid overtime. Consequently, it causes no inconvenience; and in industries where work is irregular the workmen themselves are most clamorous for overtime. It is impossible to escape from this dilemma: either the law permits overtime, and is a useless, barren expression of legislative opinion, or, on the other hand, it forbids overtime, and, when enforced, degenerates into an intolerable tyranny.

aided by the best bureaus of labor statistics. It is no affair of the state to see to it that a given amount of labor procures sufficient wages for the workman, and to create employment under these conditions. No more can the state put a stop to the good will, strength, and capacity of the man who finds it advantageous to work longer or differently from the average factory hand; for observe that, under this system, the state would have to regulate the conduct as well as the duration of labor. To give it such powers would, in fact, reduce the *élite* of the working class to a condition of servitude, and give civilization a set-back by depriving it of its best elements. The only legitimate progress is that which springs from custom and the free play of interests; for then it harmonizes with the economic conditions of different countries, and respects the right of individuals to run their own risks quite outside the beaten track of the community.

The same objection holds against fixing a minimum rate of wages by law. Undoubtedly, it is unjust not to pay the workman wages enough to enable him to live according to local standards of comfort. Employers who take advantage of a glut in the labor market to refuse such wages are guilty of their brothers' blood. Still, their business must yield a profit; and the labor of the workman in question must produce an adequate equivalent for his wages. Of course there are times when business does not pay; there are factories which by virtue of changes in facilities for communication and in equipment can only vegetate; there are old workmen who can no longer entirely earn their own living, but can still find something to do. The legislator cannot enter into all these details. He would constantly be guilty of grave injustice. Do we realize the new and great responsibility which would weigh upon him, when called upon to decide that a certain industrial district is too densely populated to give work to all its inhabitants, or that a certain form of manufact-

ure is superannuated? Again, he might be obliged to furnish employment to those who are unable to find work with private employers at the legal rate. The minimum rate of wages as a moral theory cannot be too strongly advocated. Here lies the duty of the pulpit, the press, and of all the organs of public opinion; but fixing and enforcing a minimum of wages by law would be the first step in the establishment of collectivism, just as in former times in England and Germany fixing the maximum of wages by government was a means of keeping laborers in a condition of servitude.

The notion of insuring workmen against the principal risks of life — accident, sickness, disability, and old age — is very enticing. Highly perfected forms of insurance already exist in all our great industries. Since 1882, of the 111,317 workmen engaged in our collieries, 109,337 have profited by institutions of this kind. Our six great railway companies have established for their employees systems of insurance, notably a pension service, based upon actuarial estimates and upon economic principles most favorable to the family. It is safe to say that, in the group of large industries, all workmen permanently attached to the works are sufficiently guaranteed against the various risks of labor. On the other hand, in the country, population is so stable and family ties are so respected that agricultural laborers and rural artisans are well-nigh always aided in time of need. But between these two categories there remains a large number of laborers not covered by any form of insurance. The mutual aid societies, of which we shall speak later, include only a minority of the working population. Nevertheless, inasmuch as the French law of employer's liability in case of accident is far more favorable to the workman than the English law, and inasmuch, on the other hand, as private charitable institutions are numerous and well managed, the question of workingmen's insurance does not excite

the populace. Liebknecht, at the recent socialist congress in Marseilles, was able to say disdainfully that it was at most a subject for magazine articles.

It is the influence of German examples upon the course of thought all over Europe, even in France, that has made discussions of the triple compulsory insurance the order of the day for the press and shortly for Parliament. Since 1879 a large number of plans have been brought forward, either by the government or at the suggestion of deputies. None has come to anything. The whole matter is difficult to regulate. Meanwhile, German experience has gone on unfolding. We have seen how insurance against accident and sickness increased cases of deception, not only entailing unforeseen financial burdens, but also demoralizing the workman. An expert in this department, Mr. John Graham Brooks, has pointed out that "weakness in the German imperial Socialism" in the British *Economic Journal* for June, 1892. On the other hand, the execution of the imperial law of 1889, relative to insurance against disability and old age, excites universal discontent throughout Germany. France and Belgium are, therefore, much less inclined to follow this example to-day than they were some years ago. Catholics, though pretty well divided on this question, which involves subtle technicalities, are unanimous in their opposition to state subsidy for workingmen's insurance. In purely Catholic countries the principle of the legal right of the poor to parish aid has never been recognized. There are no general systems of public relief. Private charity and voluntary institutions are correspondingly more active and generous. Besides, whatever one's theoretical view of the matter, it must be recognized that there is no more pauperism in Spain, in France, and in Belgium than in England and in Germany. Possibly, indeed, there is less. The reasons, therefore, that in Great Britain, Germany, and Denmark make workingmen's insurance with state

subsidies seem a desirable substitute for poor laws do not exist in France. The great objection to it is that, if the principle of a contribution from the public treasury were recognized, politicians would propose an increase at every general election. It would be an auction where all the parties would rival one another in promises at the expense of the tax-payers; and, with the heavy budgets of modern nations, the great majority of citizens are tax-payers. The conviction is growing more and more that general legislation ought to be restricted to the encouragement of those insurance combinations between employers and employees which provide for the various risks of labor, with a view to increasing existing institutions and making them more efficient. The iron-masters of France have already formed a syndicate office of insurance against accidents, which is a model worth imitating.*

B. One of the characteristic features of the internal social structure of France is the moral reconciliation which is spontaneously taking place between employers and employed, above all where socialist politicians have not sown prejudices to excite evil passions. It is generally considered that habitual employment of workmen carries with it, beyond the payment of the wages agreed upon, a moral obligation to take as much interest as possible in everything which tends to improve the material and even the moral condition of the workmen. Hence the common use of *patron* to designate the employer,—a word peculiar to the French language, and without any exact equivalent in either English or German. *Patronage* in this country is a natural consequence of old tradition and of that peculiar trait of national character,—*bonhomie*. Even at the present time, in many districts the friendliest relations exist between the large proprietors and their tenants, and their neighbors, the small proprie-

* See *La Réforme Sociale*, February 1, 1892, for information in regard to this association.

tors. When the factories were first started,—above all, those started in the country or in small towns,—the *patron* knew personally all his workmen, most of whom belonged to the locality. He took an interest in their affairs; and, in case of necessity, he came to their aid with advice and assistance. At this primitive stage—which for that matter still continues in more than one factory—*patronage* was an affair of custom, and did not express itself in formal institutions. The distinguished economist Le Play, in the extensive studies that he carried on in all parts of Europe from 1829 to 1864, recognized that everywhere these customs were assuring a social peace unknown where business managers had organized their relations with their employees solely upon the basis of the law of supply and demand.* His writings have largely contributed to the spread of the idea of the moral duty of *patronage* in large industries; and all the mines, all the railways, all the great business houses, tax their ingenuity to invent institutions to add to the efficacy of the wages paid to their workmen. To this end they make considerable pecuniary sacrifices. Public opinion is active in this direction; and at the great Exposition of 1889 the special exposition of social economy made, in its 15th section, a review of *les institutions patronales* existing in France. The report of this section by M. Cheysson is, so to speak, an admirable object-lesson; while at the same time it shows the foreign reader the solid underpinning upon which French society rests.† To-day it is only in third-class establishments that employers do not take more or less care for the well-being of their employees. Nevertheless, the exercise of *patronage* in France does not prevent the conflict of capital and labor: the recent strikes are sad proof of this. If the

*Vide *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, July, 1890, for an article by Mr. Henry Higgs, on Le Play and his doctrine.

† Paris, 1892. Issued in 4to for the Imprimerie Nationale.

foundation of society is better in France than in many other countries, the instability of the government and the harassing strife of political parties are a constant cause of excitement for the masses, and the agents of anarchy and collectivism are clever in taking advantage of it. At this moment the country is paying the penalty for the immorality with which in 1889 the Boulangists, on the one hand, and the party in power, on the other, vied with each other for the co-operation of the anarchist agents, in order to gain the general elections.

This retrospective glance was necessary to an understanding of the real condition of things in France. But, quite apart from this unhealthy intrusion of politics into the relations of workmen and their *patrons*, *patronage* has weak points which must be indicated.

It is not, as an American reader might think at first glance, that *patronage* impairs the dignity of the workman and shocks the feeling of civil equality so wide-spread in France. The *patron* who would do good solely by show of authority, and manage his workmen as a colonel does his regiment, is a nearly extinct type. He was well enough formerly, but he does not belong to our day; and Le Play showed very well the proper conception of the idea of *patronage* when he said that *patronage* is, above all, beneficent when it strives to fulfil three conditions, —to conceal itself discreetly, to communicate to its clients as far as possible the feeling of their own initiative, and to leave to them entire direction of the interests and conduct of institutions created for their benefit.* Thus understood, *patronage* is not a means of discipline hostile to the working classes, as the socialist orators falsely allege. It is the accomplishment, in a method suited to democratic conditions, of rigorous duties of conscience imposed upon riches by the gospel.

The great French manufacturers have understood this;

* *La Réforme Sociale*, chap. xlvii. § 23.

and they embody the idea of *patronage* by devising for their workmen institutions for relief, pension funds, cheap dwellings, and distributive societies, which they subsidize largely, but in the management of which they gradually interest their workmen. For experience shows it is upon this condition alone that these institutions can attain their great moral end,—the economic education of the laborer and the development of his foresight.

In spite of such sacrifices on the part of *patrons* in large industries, notably corporations, which are becoming more numerous in large industries as everywhere else, uneasiness reigns among many working populations, otherwise very favorably situated as regards provident institutions. The cause is often absence of personal relations between employer and employee,—the great number of the latter making such relations practically impossible,—the rigorous methods of engineers and overseers, and, in short, the misunderstandings that spread among workmen without any power on the part of the head of the enterprise to explain them.

This psychological side of the factory question calls for more attention. A long time ago the most devoted *patrons* undertook the task of personally receiving their workmen at certain hours of the day, to listen to their grievances. Some have tried to create within the factory consulting councils, where the head of the enterprise meets representatives of the workmen to consult about modifications of shop rules and about the use of fines. These councils are not formed after a fixed type. They must differ decidedly with each factory; and, the more generous the spirit of the *patrons*, the better the results.

C. In a word, *patronage* only accomplishes its full results when it is Christian. M. Diterlin of Rothau (Vosges) expressed this as follows, at the assembly of the Evangelical Church in September, 1869:—

The workingman does not wish in evangelical institutions to be treated as a mere number. He wishes to feel the hand of another in his own. He wishes that, whatever may happen to him, the heart of his neighbor should beat in unison with his. In city establishments much is often done for the workmen without receiving the slightest recognition from them, because the employers make their benefits a wall of division between themselves and their workmen. In some other places the same benevolent institutions will have a good effect, because the workmen feel the heart of their chief in everything. It is thus that the question as to workingmen is brought back upon the ground of the gospel.

M. Harmel, the distinguished Catholic manufacturer of the Val des Bois, adopted these sentiments when he announced to the world the intimate relations which his father first, and he himself afterwards, had established with their workmen. The means adopted consisted of a group of religious associations formed between workmen of different ages and of both sexes, to which he gives the historic name of corporation, or gild. The workmen thus grouped establish, with the assistance of their *patron*, various economic institutions found in other factories; but the soul of the system is the community of religious sentiment between the employer and his employees. In the August number of the *Forum* for 1892 is a description of the Val des Bois factory by John Graham Brooks, to which we refer the reader. He will see that strikes are there unknown, and that nearly one thousand workmen express themselves as highly satisfied with their lot. At Montceau-les-Mines the anarchists, who tried their bombs ten years ago, have been absolutely exterminated by the workmen themselves since the manager of the factory, M. Chagot, adopted methods similar to those at Val des Bois. In the department *du Nord*, which is a region of mines and large factories, the principal manufacturers have formed an association under the patronage of the Virgin, "Notre Dame de l'Usine," which aims at the spread of analogous institutions among the different factories, and

unites the efforts of the *patrons* to this great end,—the Christianizing of factory labor. There is a similar association in the industrial group at Chaumont in the *Haute-Marne*. Already these groups of Christian *patrons* and workmen present a formidable resistance to the attack of collectivists and anarchists. The large manufacturers who instituted the Christian social movement in this region combined with ardent zeal a just conception of modern economic conditions. Science demonstrates the identity of interests of capital and labor, but it remains for religious feeling to cement by the conquest and defence of a common ideal the union of those who represent these interests.

The rich cannot hope to save society of themselves alone. They must enlist in its defence the *élite* of the working classes, by making them understand that they, as well as the rich, are interested in the defence of religious rights, in the good education of children, in the respect and honor of the fireside, in the greatness of the country. Upon this solid foundation will arise in good time the fruitful institutions of co-operation and mutual aid. The older Christian countries, with their religious traditions, their charitable congregations, and their spirit of propaganda, have great reasons for a work of this magnitude; and it is, so to speak, scarcely begun. Success depends, above all, on the moral worth and inner Christian life of the men joining the movement. But it is also essential that legislatures put no obstacle in the way. Unfortunately, in France liberty of association only exists subject to great restrictions and to the constant interference of the police. Moreover, it is almost impossible to establish perpetual foundations for economic or charitable purposes. But the formation of mutual associations between *patrons* and workmen presupposes full liberty of association and perfect freedom in instituting perpetual collective properties devoted to the public welfare. The laws of the

United States are in this respect the ideal of the French Catholics; and, when a turn in affairs puts them in power, they will endeavor to introduce such laws in their own country.

D. Catholics thus expect a great deal from the different forms of co-operation, or of mutual assistance, and from trade associations. The *patronage* of employers is especially adapted to the needs of workmen in large industries; but artisans, merchants and their clerks, and the workmen in small shops form the majority of the army of labor; and appropriate institutions are necessary for the protection of their interests and the development of their moral worth. Co-operative production, although counting some successes, offers too many risks to be generally recommended to workmen. On the contrary, the field of action open to distributive co-operation is practically indefinite. Catholics in France and Belgium have been rather slow to perceive its advantages; but to-day they are entering resolutely on this field, and soon there will not be left a Christian factory, a Catholic workingmen's club, or a Catholic trades-union, which does not have its distributing society.

Usury not being common in France and Belgium, loan societies have thus far attracted less attention. Nevertheless, a Franciscan friar, Father Ludovic de Besse, is their great propagandist, and presides annually at a congress of people's banks. Under his direction a special periodical, *L'Union Économique*, expounds the theory and practice of co-operation. Unfortunately, there is nothing in France corresponding to the loan and building associations and to the mutual life insurance in the United States. The author of this paper never tires of holding them up to his fellow-countrymen for imitation.

A very proper form of mutual aid in France is the benefit societies, which insure allowances in sickness and the payment of funeral expenses. Some give old age

pensions. The rate of assessment is diminished in many of them by the annual contributions of honorary members not participating in benefits. The benefit societies include the most moral and provident part of the working class. It is essential to their development that they should have unrestricted rights to receive gifts and legacies. Under the Restoration, and again after 1848, Catholics were the most active promoters of benefit societies. The name of Armand de Melun is surely known the other side of the Atlantic by all who are interested in the practical aspects of popular economics. The same rôle of apostle of mutual aid is filled in Belgium at the present time by the venerable Baron T'Kint de Roodenbacke, first vice-president of the Senate.

In France, for a score of years, the attention of the most ardent Catholics has been somewhat diverted from these useful institutions, and concentrated on trades-unions. This idea is especially popular with a great society at the head of which is the Count de Mun, "*L'Œuvre des Cercles Catholiques d'Ouvriers*." The complete destruction in 1791 of the old trade guilds, and numerous religious fraternities which offered many advantages to workmen, the prohibition of their assemblies and associations for the defence of their common interests, had been vigorously resented by them; and in the course of the nineteenth century a great number of workingmen's associations were reorganized under the name of *syndicats*, secretly at first, then with government toleration, and, finally, under a legal form dating from the law of the 21st of March, 1884. Many of the organizations have been formed with hostile intent to employers, and are the hot-bed of strikes. But it is none the less true that the tendency of people of the same calling to unite is natural and legitimate. It meets the workman's craving for sociability, and it has been observed that benefit societies and co-operative associations based upon identity of occupa-

tion are far more solid than others. Finally, trades-unions are often necessary to secure for workmen equitable wages and conditions of employment.

We cannot flatter ourselves that we have seen the end of strikes; but they are less dangerous when, instead of being the result of spasmodic impulse and secret manœuvres, they are ordered after mature consideration by a responsible organization. As George Howell, M.P., has so well shown in his book, *Trade Unionism, New and Old*, the older these workingmen's organizations, the larger their reserve funds, and the more numerous their provident institutions, the greater chance there is that conflicts with capital will be rare, and that they will be settled by arbitration. This is why French Catholics have sought to form labor organizations, subject to their control. They are especially devoted to the formation of mixed organizations known as guilds, where employers and workmen meet on equal footing, and where a religious brotherhood establishes fraternal relations based upon community of faith. In some towns these mixed organizations have given excellent results. As a model, I will mention "L'Union Co-opérative de la Fabrique Lyonnaise," composed of three groups,—the weavers, the clerks, and the manufacturers.* With favorable surroundings, these mixed organizations, or Christian guilds, would increase in number. If the unrestricted right of holding and receiving legacies were guaranteed to them, they might become the nucleus of collective properties for the benefit of certain groups of workmen, and they would be a valuable element of social stability; for in densely populated countries, like France and Belgium, it is impossible to insure every one private ownership of land. This is one among many reasons for giving the proletariat who compose those limited and natural groups

* *Vide* the author's work, *Le Socialisme d'État et la Réforme Sociale*, 2d edition, Paris, 1892, pp. 337-400.

some interest in common funds held in perpetuity for their benefit by the gild. Once rich and old, these Christian gilds might have a benign influence upon the conditions of labor. At the same time they can only be useful so long as they are voluntary institutions, and so long as workmen and employers who do not wish to join are perfectly at liberty to remain outside. Democracy, or modern society established under widely different political circumstances in the United States, in England, in France, and then in all civilized countries, rests essentially upon freedom of labor. This implies the right of each one to settle where he wishes, to follow the trade he likes, and make the best fair bargain he can for his own ends. This *régime* has not fulfilled the expectation of its promoters by putting a stop to all economic ills; but it brought about a condition of freedom contrasting so beneficently with the regulations of earlier times that it was welcomed by the people with transports of joy. To it is due the great industrial development of our time, which depends upon ceaseless changes in technical methods, and, as a whole, has done so much to improve the material condition of the masses.

But freedom of labor is already seriously menaced by trades-unions in England and the United States, and by certain labor organizations in France. Nothing short of the full power of the law can avail to protect the rights of those who wish to escape this tyranny. If unwise legislation were to make membership in gilds or trades-unions compulsory, it would subject not only capital, but labor, to an intolerable tyranny, and would prepare the way, in France at least, for the temporary triumph of collectivism. Nevertheless, a group of French Catholics, having as their organ *L'Association Catholique* and enjoying the patronage of the Count de Mun, advocates this idea. Carried away by logic, this school curses freedom of labor, calls loudly for state regulation of wages and of industry,

and agrees with the Socialists in declaring that a radical change must be made in the existing economic order. Only, as the ideal of this school is not identical with that of the Marx collectivists, and as it would set up by a "counter revolution" (*sic*) a general co-operative system analogous to that of the Middle Ages, it would also replace universal suffrage by a "representation of interests"; that is to say, by a classification of citizens according to trade, or perhaps according to the amount of their property. In such a politico-social organization Christian influences would develop of their own accord, if we may credit the disciples of this school,* which is mentioned here to complete the picture. But such systems are of no practical importance; and they only arrive at the stage of theories, of scholastic discussions, thanks to the remoteness of their originators from business and from the responsibilities of power. To be assured that these theories cannot be realized, it is only necessary to recall what has happened in Belgium since the revision of the constitution. There "representation of interests" had been for years extolled by distinguished publicists of different parties. When the scheme was presented to Parliament, it received but two votes, so far out of touch is it with the conditions of modern society. One may, therefore, generally count on the practical test to do justice to the Utopias and reactionary schemes which have been troubling the heads of a certain number of Catholics, whose liberal views and good works have just been mentioned.†

The best way to gain an idea of the practical measures

* The limits of this paper forbid an explanation of the way in which the re-establishing of compulsory trade guilds in Austria-Hungary in 1883 and 1884 was made possible by social conditions, and by an historical development wholly different from that of Western Europe. It is enough to say that this restoration of the old economic order is checked in one direction. It has been impossible to adapt it to large industries.

† The only danger of these theories is that their authors can, by voting with collectivists and State Socialists, secure the passage of certain special measures, thereby adding to undesirable government interference with labor.

which Catholics are disposed to rely upon for the solution of the social question is to glance at what they have done in Belgium, where repeated success at the polls has given them control of government for eight years, and where the historical development and the actual economic conditions are very similar to those in France. Private initiative and government action are here most auspiciously combined. At Verviers, Liège, Mons, and Charleroi industrial societies have been formed to extend the practice of *patronage* in the factories. Associations of Christian artisans, bearing the old popular name of guilds, have sprung up in the chief centres. At Brussels they have established a sort of headquarters called "La Maison des Métiers," where the principal workingmen's associations are concentrated, serving as a labor exchange (*Bourse du Travail*). After some opposition arising from the private interest of shop-keepers, the leaders of the Catholic movement have resolutely set about founding distributive co-operative societies.

Parliament has voted a series of laws to prevent certain abuses. In order to protect workmen and small employers against the allurements of credit, wages are exempted from seizure beyond one-fifth of their amount, and are non-transferable beyond two-fifths. The truck system and payment of wages in saloons are prohibited. A law passed in 1889 regulated judiciously the labor of children and women in mines, factories, and certain classes of workshops. A series of government regulations has largely curtailed the train service on Sunday, canal transportation on Sunday has been suppressed, and the postal service considerably lightened. By means of fiscal measures analogous to the high-license system of the United States, efforts have been made to diminish that plague of Belgium, misdemeanors caused by alcoholic drinks, and societies have been formed to establish temperance taverns adapted to the habits of the country. A

law has also been passed, granting certain privileges to benefit societies, and offering them great facilities in establishing pensions for their members by means of individual accounts opened in the name of the society at the general savings and pension bank, which does business under government control and guarantee. The receipts from honorary members, who are very numerous, are used more especially to assist the contributions of regular members to the pension fund. Under this statute the number of benefit societies in the kingdom has doubled, — a proof that this ancient and modest institution is of more benefit to the people than many new combinations which are at first glance more striking. Although Parliament preserves a wise reticence in regard to workingmen's insurance, pending the development of German experience, it has taken two very significant steps,— the one creating the "Councils of Industry and Labor," the other in passing a special law favorable to workingmen's dwellings.

The Councils of Industry and Labor are started wherever their formation is deemed useful. Composed partly of employers and partly of workingmen's delegates, chosen by their fellows to represent special trades, they are expected to give advice on such questions as the government may submit to them; and from time to time they fulfil the office of bureaus of statistics of labor. Then, in case strikes break out within their jurisdiction, they are invited to act as boards of conciliation, though their verdict is not necessarily binding. Troubles would only be aggravated if it were. Between 1887 and 1891 30 councils, subdivided into 90 sections, were organized; and they have obviated several strikes by their mediation.

In a densely populated country, like Belgium, the laborer naturally finds great difficulties in housing himself suitably and in becoming the owner of his dwelling. The law of 1889 authorized the general savings and pension bank (*Caisse Général d'Épargne et de Retraites*) to lend

a certain proportion of its funds at 3 per cent., or even at 2½ per cent., to the societies founded for the purpose of building workingmen's houses and enabling the occupants to become owners by means of annual payments. At the same time the law appealed to the many generous people in the country to form committees for the purpose of "watching over the construction and location of workingmen's dwellings, making a study of everything that concerns the healthfulness of houses occupied by laboring classes, and encouraging thrift and insurance." These committees have been formed in great numbers, political considerations being wholly excluded. They have contributed much to the growth of benefit societies. Above all, they have founded loan associations in aid of workingmen's houses, which act as agents and guarantors in the dealings of the Caisse Général d'Épargne with workmen who desire to build houses. In addition, the ingenious combination of life insurance gives the family of the workman immediate ownership of the house in case he dies before the annual instalments have all been paid. In Brussels, indeed, a workman can construct a suitable house for 3,000 francs, land included. It is to be hoped that an important *élite* of workmen will become proprietors of their homes, and thus enter the ranks of that *bourgeoisie* which is denounced with such indignation by socialist leaders of every stripe, though in reality the ideal of all industrious and thrifty workmen.

The *comités de patronage* are a nascent institution; but, to judge from first appearances, they may be expected to do more and more. They interest in the welfare of the people many of those persons of wealth and leisure who are so numerous in our old societies, and who are therefore not simply heads of factories concerned with a special group of workmen. But the obligation of the well-to-do classes to give disinterested aid to workmen who are in the way of helping themselves is a Christian duty, distinct

from almsgiving and quite in keeping with the development of modern society. Already in the towns of North Italy the *patronati*, including clergymen, members of the liberal professions, and the nobility, have powerfully aided the rise of people's banks, distributive co-operation, and forms of workingmen's insurance suited to the country.* In Belgium the general conditions are still more favorable, and it will be an honor to that nation to have given such practical expression to the duty of the *well-to-do classes in a democracy*.

At the same time that the Belgian government was passing a body of laws so favorable to workmen, it was careful to guarantee freedom of labor. The law of May 30, 1892, without in any way limiting the right of combination, strengthened the penalties for boycotting and other crimes against the liberty of those who want to work or hire work. Since coming into power, the Catholic party has had to struggle with many difficulties. Belgium is permeated both by German Socialism in the Flemish provinces and by French Socialism in the Walloon provinces. It feels the recoil of the agitations which arise in both the neighboring countries. Finally, the revision of the constitution was the occasion of an uproar that politicians made the most of. In spite of this, in eight years peace has been re-established and the material condition of the workman considerably improved. Wages have risen, and the necessities of life have fallen in price as a result of general causes which tend to bring about a fall in the staple articles of consumption. This favorable situation must be credited in a large measure to the good policy of the present minister. He has cut down taxes and public expenses. He has stripped most of the taxes from coffee, which is a very important article in common diet. He has opposed all efforts to raise the

* Author's work on *Le Socialisme d'État et la Réforme Sociale*, 2d edition, Paris: Plon, 1890, p. 359.

price of bread by import duties on cereals. While favoring the claims of workmen, he has vigorously maintained the freedom of labor. A good administration and a good policy have an influence upon economic conditions that cannot be overlooked.

Finally, there is ground for hoping that humanity is to make substantial progress. Many forces are conspiring to this end,—first of all a public sentiment well disposed towards manual laborers. It not only tends more and more to check the abuses which arise, but experience shows that in Europe as in the United States the issue of strikes is almost always in favor of that one of the two parties for which public opinion gives its verdict. This *public sentiment* is due both to the influence of democracy and to the gospel, ever inclined to help the weak. It has received a great impulse from the encyclical published by Pope Leo XIII. in 1890. But democracy has its dangers, and universal suffrage cannot solve economic problems as it cuts the Gordian knot of politics.

Science and religion must teach the sovereign people that in practice it can no more do everything than in justice it can desire everything. These two great forces co-ordinated with one another under the supreme law of Christ are the necessary safeguard of democracy. It is one of the greatest services that the Pope has rendered modern society that, in addition to giving a great impetus to the practical amelioration of the lot of workingmen, and in addition to upholding their rights as against capital, he has at the same time condemned the principal errors relating to economic order, and has fixed an impassable gulf between Socialism and the great religious organization over which he presides.

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December, 1892.